



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### A PESKY CRAB AND WETLANDS BY TELEPHONE-- NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

● Crab Watch: Faster than a raccoon dog! More insidious than a European rabbit! More terrifying than a multimam-mate rat! It's America's latest potential wildlife pest: the mitten crab!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service suspects that this Asian species of fresh-water crab could pose a possible threat to humans, native wildlife species, and agriculture and is considering adding the mitten crab to the Federal list of injurious wildlife. In a notice in the January 26 Federal Register, the agency has requested all available biological, economic, and related information to determine if such an action is necessary.



Photo courtesy Dustin Chivers,  
Calif. Acad. of Sciences

The 3-inch-wide mitten crab, also known as the "wool crab" because of its long, hairy legs, is harvested for food in mainland China. Until recently, it had been imported legally to small food markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles, where the crustacean commonly fetches from \$10 to \$15 a pound as a delicacy.

The California Fish and Game Commission, fearing that the mitten crab could escape into the State's extensive network of levees and earth-fill irrigation canals where its burrowing habits could cause major damage to these structures, has already banned its importation by listing it as a prohibited species. California's concern prompted it to petition the Fish and Wildlife Service to add the mitten crab to the injurious wildlife list. That addition would prohibit live crabs and eggs from being imported into the United States.

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Mitten crabs are believed to cross land at night or during storms, rapidly colonizing new areas. Already, the crab has spread throughout Europe from Great Britain to Finland. Mitten crabs have migrated over 400 miles up Germany's Elbe River and more than 800 miles into mainland China from the coast.

In addition to endangering waterways, the mitten crab could also pose a threat to other crustaceans and mollusks in the United States, as well as turtles and young birds. The species is host to the Oriental lung fluke, a threat to humans and other warm-blooded vertebrates and the cause of serious health problems in Asia.

Under the Federal Lacey Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service may ban the importation of fish and wildlife species deemed a threat to native wildlife or humans, or in the interest of forestry, agriculture, or horticulture. Several large groups of foreign wildlife species are prohibited from entry into the United States under this law, including all species of "flying fox" or fruit bats, mongooses and meerkats, Indian wild dogs, and Java sparrows, among others, because of the damage they cause to crops and native wildlife species.

Comments on the Fish and Wildlife Service's request for information on the mitten crab may be submitted to the Division of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1717 H Street NW., Washington, DC 20240.

● Wetlands by Telephone: Comedians have their "Dial-a-Joke." Procrastinators call the "Time-of-Day" service. The distraught can ring up "Dial-a-Prayer." Now, biologists, developers, and conservationists can "Dial-a-Wetland" for the latest technical information about those places that biologists call the most productive areas in the world for fish and wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory and the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Cartographic Information Center have recently joined to make maps of the Nation's wetlands available from a new toll-free telephone number.

By dialing 1-800-USA-MAPS, the public can obtain information on the availability of any of over 10,000 highly detailed wetlands maps covering 45 percent of the Lower 48 States and 12 percent of Alaska. This total includes roughly 85 percent of the Lower 48's coastal zone.

The National Wetlands Inventory's map system uses USGS topographic base maps with wetlands delineations that have been combined photographically to produce composite maps. Although most maps are available at the 1:24,000 scale, some maps are available at 1:62,500 or 1:100,000 scales. They are available in two formats: mylar at \$3.50 per map, and paper at \$1.75 per map. There is also a \$6.50 shipping and handling charge for each order.

Upon calling the 1-800-USA-MAPS line, customers should provide the name of the State or town for which they are seeking wetlands information and, if they know it, the name of the USGS map series quadrangle that covers their area of interest. Information on availability and ordering instructions will be provided by the National Cartographic Information Center. Orders with check or money order, made payable to U.S. Department of the Interior, USGS, should be sent to: NCIC, U.S. Geological Survey, 507 National Center, Reston, Virginia 22092. Maps will then be mailed within 5 working days from the National Wetlands Inventory in St. Petersburg, Florida.